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F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

* Secretary-General recommends extension of UNAVEM III until 8 August; says bold measures by parties in Angola needed to make peace process irreversible.

* Secretary-General says United Nations has useful role to play in Rwanda even though UNAMIR's mandate will end 8 March.

* Secretary-General says Niger must return to democracy and rule of law.

* Delegates to Conference on Disarmament welcome France's decision to stop nuclear testing and urge China to follow suit.

* Human Rights in Tibet used as a pretext for political attacks, China tells Non-Governmental Organization Committee.

* Habitat II's final preparatory session to be held at UN Headquarters February 5 to 16; UNDP sponsors roundtable meeting on urban poverty for mayors from developing countries.

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The failure of past attempts to bring peace to Angola underscored the need for international involvement and encouragement, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In a report to the Security Council, dated 31 January, he recommended the mandate of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III) be extended until 8 August. He said the pace of the peace process had been disappointingly slow. However, Government steps in recent weeks were encouraging. He urged the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) to respond positively, first by a large-scale and fully verifiable movement of its troops to quartering areas. There was no excuse for further delays in the release of prisoners or in providing information to the United Nations as required by the Lusaka Protocol, he added.

Bold measures by the Angolan Government and UNITA were needed to make the peace process irreversible, the Secretary-General continued. Military

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talks must be concluded urgently, with workable and fair agreements on the incorporation of UNITA troops in the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA), and the gradual demobilization of its other forces. The FAA soldiers must accelerate their withdrawal to the nearest barracks and complete the quartering of the rapid reaction police. Joint demining and opening of roads, and the free circulation of people throughout the country, was imperative for national reconciliation, the Secretary-General said. He urged President Jose E. dos Santos and UNITA leader Mr. Jonas Savimbi to meet as soon as possible to promote mutual confidence and resolve outstanding differences.

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The United Nations has a useful role to play in Rwanda, even though the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) will end on 8 March, according to the Secretary-General. In a report to the Security Council, dated 30 January, he said the Government had indicated that the country's overwhelming needs required the international community's attention and assistance. Despite combined efforts of UNAMIR and other UN agencies, particularly the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the repatriation of Rwandan refugees was very slow. Long-term peace would be elusive as long as large concentrations of Rwandan nationals were encamped in neighbouring countries, he said and welcomed regional initiatives to solve the problem.

Genuine peace and reconciliation also depended on efforts by the Government and the international community to end the prevailing environment of impunity by bringing those guilty of genocide and massacres to justice, the Secretary-General said. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda had issued its first indictments and the Rwandan Supreme Court was reactivating the country's judiciary. There had been progress towards reconstruction, rehabilitation and development, but much remained to be done. The Secretary-General said his Special Representative was examining, with the Government and United Nations agencies, the possible nature and mandate of a UN presence in the country after UNAMIR's mandate expired. He noted that the number of staff with the UN human rights field operation in Rwanda had fallen from 120 to 93 in the last twelve months, because of a drop in voluntary contributions.

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The Secretary-General said today it was important for Niger to return soon to democracy and the rule of law, according to a United Nations spokesman. In a meeting with Niger's Permanent Representative, Adamou Seydou, the Secretary-General said he was aware of the appointment of a civilian cabinet but such a measure was not sufficient. He expressed the hope that the authorities in Niamey would space no effort to restore the image of a democratic Niger.

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Delegates to the Conference on Disarmament welcomed France's decision to end its nuclear tests in the South Pacific and urged China to end its tests. The Conference is meeting in Geneva. Several speakers also welcomed the formal consent to ratification of the second Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II) by the United States Senate last month and called on the Russian Federation's Parliament to do the same.

Australia said it was extremely regrettable that the tests ever took place and the onus was now on France to rebuild the international confidence necessary for further progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The representative of Japan regretted that as many as six tests were conducted, despite repeated appeals from the international community and she hoped France would redouble its efforts towards an early conclusion of the test-ban treaty.

The representative of France said her country had shown the utmost restraint in conducting the nuclear testing campaign. An independent mission of experts would visit the test site and France would sign the protocols of the 1985 South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga). Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs said further tests could seriously undermine work achieved in the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. She welcomed France's decision to end all tests and urged China to follow that example.

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The main challenge facing the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) was how to defuse the threat to international peace and security caused by the shelter crisis in cities and rural areas, according to its Secretary-General, Wally N'Dow. The Conference will be held in Istanbul, Turkey in June. Its final preparatory session, which will begin on Monday at UN Headquarters, will finalize a draft statement of principles and a global plan of action, entitled the "Habitat Agenda". The document will provide guidelines for the sustainable development of the world's cities, towns and villages for the next 25 years.

Meanwhile, mayors from developing countries are expected to participate in a roundtable discussion at Headquarters on February 6, to discuss urban poverty. The event, which is sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is one of a series of activities taking place during the final preparatory session for the Habitat II.

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The so-called issue of human rights in Tibet was being used as a cover for attempts to divide a sovereign State, China, in violation Economic and Social Council resolutions, the representative of China told the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations yesterday. He said Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) barred organizations from using their consultative status to launch political attacks against Member States. Yet, Human Rights Advocates, an organization with consultative status, had attacked China on the question of Tibet at human rights forums in 1991 and 1992 and accused China of occupying Tibet. Those positions were incorrect he said.

The Committee recommended that the Council grant Category II status to ISIS International Women's Information and Communication Service, which is based in the Philippines. The Service was founded in 1974, to promote women's empowerment and participation in development and policy-making, and to build links among women worldwide so they could take part in community development. Non-governmental organizations with Category I and II consultative status are required to report every four years on their work in support of the United Nations.

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